considerable trade, especially with the Kirghiz, and has a flour­mill, distillery and tanneries. Steamers ply on the Irtysh down to Omsk and up to Lake Zaisan.

SEMÌRAMIS (c. 800 b.c.), a famous Assyrian princess, round whose personality a mass of legend has accumulated. It was not until 1910 that the researches of Professor Lehmann-Haupt of Berlin restored her to her rightful place in Babylonian-Assyrian history. The legends derived by Diodorus Siculus, Justin and others from Ctesias of Cnidus were completely disproved, and Semīramis had come to be treated as a purely legendary figure. The legends ran as follows: Semîramis was the daughter of the fish-goddess Atargatis *(q.v.)* of Ascalon in Syria, and was miraculously preserved by doves, who fed her until she was found and brought up by Simmas, the royal shepherd. Afterwards she married Onnes, one of the generals of Ninus, who was so struck by her bravery at the capture of Bactra that he married her, after Onnes had committed suicide. Ninus died, and Semîramis, succeeding to his power, traversed all parts of the empire, erecting great cities (especially Babylon) and stupendous monu- ments, or opening roads through savage mountains. She was unsuccessful only in an attack on India. At length, after a reign of forty-two years, she delivered up the kingdom to her son Ninyas, and disappeared, or, according to what seems to be the original form of the story, was turned into a dove and was thenceforth worshipped as a deity. The name of Semîramis came to be applied to various monuments in Western Asia, the origin of which was forgotten or unknown (see Strabo xvi. 1. 2). Ultimately every stupendous work of antiquity by the Euphrates or in Iran seems to have been ascribed to her —even the Behistun inscriptions of Darius (Diod. Sic. ii. 3). Of this we already have evidence in Herodotus, who ascribes to her the banks that confined the Euphrates (i. 184) and knows her name as borne by a gate of Babylon (iii. 155). Various places in Media bore the name of Semîramis, but slightly changed, even in the middle ages, and the old name of Van was Shamirarnagerd, Armenian tradition regarding her as its founder. These facts are partly to be explained by observing that, according to the legends, in her birth as well as in her disappearance from earth, Semîramis appears as a goddess, the daughter of the fish-goddess Atargatis, and herself connected with the doves of Ishtar or Astartē. The same association of the fish and dove is found at Hierapolis (Bambyce, Mabbog), the great temple at which, according to one legend, was founded by Semîramis (Lucian, *De dea Syria,* 14), where her statue was shown with a golden dove on her head (33, 39). The irresistible charms of Semîramis, her sexual excesses (which, however, belong only to the legends: there is no historical groundwork), and other features of the legend, all bear out the view that she is primarily a form of Astartë, and so fittingly conceived as the great queen of Assyria.

Professor Lehmann-Haupt, by putting together the results of archaeological discoveries, has arrived at the following con­clusions. Semîramis is the Greek form of Sammuramat. She was probably a Babylonian (for it was she who imposed the Babylonian cult of Nebo or Nabu upon the Assyrian religion). A column discovered in 1909 describes her as “ a woman of the palace of Samsi-Adad, King of the World, King of Assyria, . . . King of the Four Quarters of the World.” Ninus was her son. The dedication of this column shows that Semîramis occupied a position of unique influence, lasting probably for more than one reign. She waged war against the Indo-Germanic Medes and the Chaldaeans. The legends probably have a Median origin. A popular etymology, which connected the name with the Assyrian *summat,* “ dove,” seems to have first started the identification of the historical Semîramis with the goddess Ishtar and her doves.

See F. Lenormant, *La Légende de Sémiramis* (1873); A. H. Sayce, “ The Legend of Semîramis,” in *Hist. Rev.* (January, 1888).

SEMIRYECHENSK, a province of Russian Turkestan, including the steppes south of Lake Balkash and parts of the Tian-shan Mountains around Lake Issyk-kul. It has an area of 147,300 sq. m., and is bounded by the province of Semipalatinsk on the

N., by China (Dzungaria, Kulja, Aksu and Kashgaria) on the E. and S., and by the Russian provinces of Ferghana, Syr-darya, and Akmolinsk on the W. It owes its name *(Jity-su, Semi- ryechie, i.e.* “ Seven Rivers ”) to the rivers which flow from the south-east into Lake Balkash. The Dzungarian Ala-tau Mountains, which separate it from Kulja, extend south-west towards the river Ili, with an average height of 600o ft. above the sea, several isolated snow-clad peaks reaching 11,000 to 14,000 ft. In the south Semiryechensk embraces the intricate systems of the Ala-tau and the Tian-shan. Two ranges of the former, the Trans-Ili Ala-tau and the Kunghei Ala-tau, stretch along the north shore of Lake Issyk-kul, both ranging from 10,000 to 15,000 ft. and both partially snow-clad. South of the lake two ranges of the Tian-shan, separated by the valley of the Naryn, stretch in the same direction, lifting up their icy peaks to 16,000 and 18,000 ft.; while westwards from the lake the precipitous slopes of the Alexander chain, 9000 to 10,000 ft. high, with peaks rising 3000 to 400o ft. higher, extend into the province of Syr-darya. Another mountain-complex of much lower elevation runs north-westwards from the Trans-Ili Ala-tau towards the southern extremity of Lake Balkash. In the north, where the province borders Semipalatinsk, it includes the western parts of the Tarbagatai range, the summits of which (10,000 ft.) do not reach the limit of perpetual snow. The remainder of the province consists of a fertile steppe in the north-east (Sergiopol), and vast uninhabitable sand-steppes on the south of Lake Balkash. Southwards from the last-named, however, at the foot of the mountains and at the entrance to the valleys, there are rich areas of fertile land, which are being rapidly colonized by Russian immigrants, who have also pene­trated into the Tian-shan, to the east of Lake Issyk-kul.

The climate is thoroughly continental. In the Balkash steppes the winter is very cold ; the lake freezes every year, and the ther­mometer falls to 13° F. In the Ala-kul steppes the winds blow away the snow. The passage from winter to spring is very abrupt, and the prairies are rapidly clothed with vegetation, which, however, is soon scorched up by the sun. The average temperatures are: at Vyernyi (2405 ft. high), for the year 46·4° F., for January 17°, for July 74°; at Przhevalsk (5450 ft.), for the year 36∙5°, for January 23°, for July 63°; still higher in the mountains, at Naryn (6900 ft.) the average temperatures are only, for the year 43∙7°, for January 1∙4°, for July 64·4°. The yearly rainfall at these three places is 21∙0, 16∙0, and 11∙8 in. respectively.

The most important river is the Ili, which enters the province from Kulja and drains it for 25o m. before it enters Lake Balkash. The Chu rises in the Tian-shan Mountains and flows north-westwards through Akmolinsk; and the Naryn flows south-westwards along a longitudinal valley of the Tian-shan, and enters Ferghana to join the Syr-darya. Lake Balkash, or Denghiz, Lake Ala-kul (which was connected with Balkash in the post-Pliocene period, but now stands some hundred feet higher, and is connected by a chain of smaller lakes with Sissyk-kul), Lake Issyk-kul and the alpine lakes of Son-kul and Chatyr-kul are the principal sheets of water.

The population was estimated in 1906 as 1,080,700. Kirghiz form 76% of the population, Taranchis 5·7 %, Russians 14 % and Dzungans most of the remainder. The province is divided into six districts, the chief towns of which are Vyernyi (the capital), Jarkent, Kopal, Pishpek, Przhevalsk and Sergiopol. The chief occupation of the Russians, the Taranchis and the Dzungans, and partly also of the Kirghiz, is agriculture. The most important crops are wheat, barley, oats, millet, rice and potatoes. A variety of oil-bearing plants and green fodder, as also cotton, hemp, flax and poppies, are grown. Live-stock breeding is very extensively carried on by the Kirghiz, namely, horses, cattle, sheep, camels, goats and pigs. Orchards and fruit gardens are well developed; the crown maintains two model gardens. Bee-keeping is widely spread. The factories consist of flour-mills, distilleries, tanneries and tobacco works ; but a great many domestic trades, including carpet-weaving and the making of felt goods, saddlery and iron goods, are carried on, among both the settled inhabitants and the nomad Kirghiz. There is a trade with China, valued at less than half a million sterling annually. Previous to 1899 this province formed part of the general- governorship of the Steppes.

SEMITIC LANGUAGES, the general designation of a group of Asiatic and African languages, some Eving and some dead, namely Assyrian, Hebrew, Phoenician, Aramaic, Arabic, Ethiopie, Mahri-Socotri. The name, which was introduced by Schlözer, is derived from the fact that most nations which speak or spoke these languages are descended, according to Genesis,